



Extrait du OIEau

<http://www.oieau.org/iowater/our-projects-news-and-update/article/african-water-information-system>

African Water Information System (AWIS)

- IOWater - Our projects : news and update -

Date de mise en ligne : lundi 2 juin 2008

OIEau

Access to information on the African water sector

(The News N° 21 - January 2011)

The African Water Documentation and Information System (AWIS) is an initiative launched in 2007 by a group of institutions from the North and South : CREPA (Regional Center for Water Supply and Sanitation) OMVS (Organization for the Development of the Senegal River) through ANBO (African Network of Basin Organizations), pS-Eau (Water Solidarity Program), IOWater (International Office for Water) and WEDC (Water Engineering and Development Center).

AWIS aims to build the information management capacity of organizations in the African water sector through sharing knowledge, experience and information between water professionals, communities and local and national governments on a pan-African scale.

Over the period 2007 to 2010, the feasibility and appropriateness of AWIS were tested as part of a preparatory phase financed by the European Water Facility. It ended in 2010 with success, thanks to the involvement of twenty relay partners spread across the African continent and that feed the knowledge base, news, "waterlibrarysite" of the Web portal.

AWIS will start to expand its network of relay organizations in 2011, continuing to build know-how in information management.

Some figures on AWIS :

20 Organizations, focal points of French-speaking and English-speaking Africa (Basin Organizations, documentation centers, administrations, associations, consulting firms), 100 current events, 500 referenced documents, 160 indexed websites, 3 topical newsletters in 2010, 90,000 visitors in the last 12 months.

Access to the information, a challenge for the development of the African water sector

(The News N° 17 - February 2010)

AWIS is a project financed by the Water Facility of the European Union and the French Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs. It is managed by a consortium of partners from Northern and Southern Africa : the **African Network of Basin Organizations (ANBO)** and its secretariat, the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS), the Regional Center for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation (CREPA), the International Office for Water (IOWater), the "Solidarité- Eau" program (PS-Eau) and the Water Engineering Development Centre (WEDC).

The first meetings of AWIS Steering Committee were held in Paris at IOWater in April 2007 and in October 2007 in Dakar at OMVS head office.

The consortium, which manages AWIS, carried out, from the start, a survey involving about twenty bodies distributed throughout the African continent to identify the interest of the African stakeholders in this project, their needs and their expectations, their technical potential to collaborate.

AWIS principle relies on two large components :

- A network of partners located on the entire African continent, made up of information management organizations, public or private documentation centers, basin managers, NGOs, engineering firms, etc.
- An information system, in the form of a website, "AWIS portal", including articles, bibliographical notes, tools for integrated water resources management, links to other websites, etc. Its update is carried out by the partners' network.

AWIS activities aim at facilitating :

- the sharing of experience and access to the information on know-how in the African water sector ;
- the translation of key documents coming from the French, Portuguese and Englishspeaking countries ;
- the dissemination of research results to the end-users, for better dialogue between stakeholders and researchers, as well as a better integration of research results to meet the needs and requests coming from people in the field.

The AWIS process does not aim at replacing the existing information centers, but, on the contrary, at developing them and facilitating access to the information they manage, at referencing high quality information on the Africa water sector, and at proposing free access to this information via an Internet portal.

A partners' network

AWIS steering committee identified 12 partners, called Focal Points - FPs, distributed over French and Englishspeaking Africa.

A Focal Point is a body with its network specialized in the field of water (drinking water supply, sanitation, irrigation, IWRM, basin management, etc.). It contributes to feeding AWIS portal and participates in the development of products of common interest on topics predefined by AWIS community : topical newsletters, guidance documents, topical or geographical summaries, conferences, etc.

The project is training the people in charge of these Focal Points on the practical methods for information management and on all the skills required for feeding AWIS portal. Sub-networks may be created to develop AWIS products.

The information system

"AWIS portal", operational since January 2009, is a window of Pan-African information ; it does not create information but directs towards information. It identifies and indexes the information available with its partners having the information (FPs) and sends the visitor towards their website.

A knowledge base is at the core of the system. It consists of documentary notes filled up by the Focal Points. This portal proposes :

- a search engine which identifies the information available at the various partners,

- electronic conferences and forums of exchanges,
- a directory of the main African water stakeholders,
- AWIS products : current events of the sector, news bulletin, bibliographical syntheses, technical sheets…

Today, the portal has entered about 60 current events, 174 referenced documents, 93 websites indexed by AWIS Focal Points.

Towards an African Water Information System for better regional integration of knowledge on local water management

(The News N° 16 - December 2008)

Although there is an important quantity of information in the African water sectors, it is not very accessible for lack of an organized management system.

In Africa, the water and sanitation sector should be able to :

- * allow the communities to make better decisions, regarding the problems which affect them, to meet their needs ;
- * facilitate the capacity building of the stakeholders of the sector ;
- * improve the institutional frameworks at local and national levels.

In order to meet these needs, a group of partners of the North and South (OMVS, CREPA, PS-Water, WEDC and IOWater) proposed a feasibility study for an African Water Documentation and Information System (AWIS) to benefit from a joint financing from the European Water Facility for Africa and the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

A genuine tool for supporting decision-making for sustainable water resources management, AWIS aims to promote and facilitate the provision of information and knowledge on water in Africa via a Pan-African Web portal, which relies on associated local partners.

The process uses a two-step approach : first of all, developing and providing a mechanism for the exchange of knowledge and information (based on existing systems such as EMWIS in the Mediterranean region), then working on the stakeholders' capacity building by creating an African network gathering the organizations producing information (Basin Organizations, resources management centers, documentation centers, NGOs, etc). AWIS will be developed and tested during three years in about ten African pilot sectors, in the French-, English- and Portuguese-speaking countries. The AWIS process will then be extended to all Africa.

AWIS activities will aim at facilitating :

- the sharing of experience and access to the existing information on know-how in the African water sector ;
- the translation of key documents coming from the French-, Portuguese- and English-speaking countries to allow its use by a larger public ;
- the dissemination of research results to the end-users, whatever the scale (regional, national, basin) of this

research work. Better dialogue between stakeholders and researchers will be looked for, as well as a better integration of research results to meet the needs and requests coming from people in the field.

From an operational viewpoint, the team involved in the AWIS process will identify the existing African organizations which wish and can become sub-regional AWIS Centers (Focal Points).

The AWIS process does not aim at replacing the existing information management centers, but, on the contrary, at developing them and facilitating access to the information they manage.

AWIS, a participative process

In addition to the 5 partners, initiators of the project coordinated by OMVS, the African local partners will be involved in a Euro-African coordination committee to validate the tool feasibility during the preparatory phase. A conference, organized in Paris, will complete the feasibility phase, gathering about fifty participants coming from African organizations, wishing to get involved in the AWIS process, and other prospective users and donors.

Throughout the process, AWIS will closely work with the local stakeholders to identify their needs for capacity building and to find solutions (human resources, organization, equipment, etc.), especially during decentralized meetings.

AWIS is not only a technological tool but can also organize and direct a network of African and non-African partners, producers and users of water information (drinking water supply, sanitation, water resources management).

The first meetings of AWIS steering committee were held in Paris at IOWater in April 2007 and in October 2007 in Dakar at OMVS head office.